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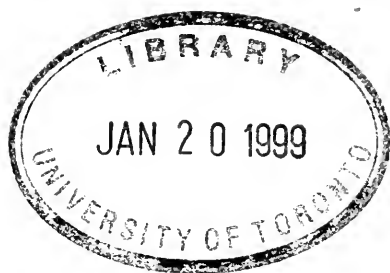
# THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND THE CONVERT FROM ISLAM

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## INTRODUCTION

THE missionary enterprise of the past hundred years has had to meet no stronger or more persistent challenge than that presented by Islam. The followers of the Prophet, possessing a virile, and often fanatical, faith, have entrenched themselves behind a wall of law and tradition founded upon their leader's life and teaching, and neither frontal assault nor flank attack has pierced their defence to any great extent. Methods have changed with the years, the negative form of controversy gradually giving way to the more positive presentation of Christian belief, coupled with private and friendly discussion of the points of contrast between Christ and Muhammad, but advance has been small. The fruit of such efforts has been very meagre in comparison with the gathering in from other religious groups, though it would seem, from reports, that India has been a richer harvest field of yields from Islam than the lands of the Middle and Far East, unless, perhaps, from Persia and Java. This is due, in large part, to the protection afforded to converts by British law, and the favourable position of European missionaries. Persecution, even to death, has been the lot of many in this land, but it has had no official backing such as has been given in lands having Muslim Governments. There are other reasons for the paucity of converts—the neglect of the task by missionary societies, the lack of well-trained specialists for such work, and the absence in the indigenous Christian community of either

evangelistic zeal towards, or any warmth of welcome for, the Muslim convert.

The aim of the present study is to examine personal experience of contacts with Muslims, and the literary material available regarding the missionary approach to the followers of Muhammad, with a view to discovering what led converts to faith in Jesus Christ, the difficulties they had to overcome, and the extent to which they solved in their own experience the constantly-recurring problem of their integration in the Christian Church.

It was apparent, at an early stage of the study, that literature on the subject is lacking. The whole subject of work among Muslims has been neglected. The Church has failed indeed in this field, and has undoubtedly created the problem we are considering by her neglect to depute adequate forces for the task.

The Right Rev. Wilson Cash writes, "Moslem evangelisation has been looked upon as unfruitful and difficult—The great majority of missionaries, even in areas where Moslems form a large percentage of the population, have given their time and strength almost entirely to non-Moslem work."<sup>1</sup>

In early years the Church seems to have felt that, there being some affinity between her faith and Islam's, she could afford to tackle other groups first, and then face the challenge of the Crescent later. "The theory is often put forward that we ought to concentrate upon mass movements and pagan work in the hope that ultimately the churches

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<sup>1</sup> Najamuddin. "What a Convert from Islam misses in the Church." Quoted in Introduction.



thus raised up will themselves tackle the Moslem problem. But will they? The history of the Church shows that the neglect of Islam in the past has cost the Church dearly."<sup>1</sup> It is pointed out that any strategy is bad which leaves in the rear of advance a strong hostile force which threatens communications. Yet the immensity of the task has not been adequately recognised by the Church as a whole, and those not in close touch with Islam have tended to consider it a simple problem, and "a matter of course that Muslims will be converted immediately upon the presentation of such a reasonable message as that of the Gospel."<sup>2</sup>

This brief reference to the historical background of the question is necessary, for the neglect of the task by the Church accounts, in part, for the lack of converts, and has created certain prejudices in the minds of converts from other groups which make the acceptance of the Muslim into the community most difficult. To quote an eminent missionary, "The painful truth remains that the Moslem convert is not welcomed by the Church as a whole with open arms."<sup>3</sup>

There are therefore two sections in the present study. First we must examine both the main hindrances and the helpful factors in conversions to Christianity; secondly we must investigate the convert's integration in the Christian group. On these sections our conclusions must be based.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Call from the Moslem World." 1926. p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> "Lucknow 1911" p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> R. McCheyne Patterson. "What a Convert from Islam misses in the Church." Introduction.

## HINDRANCES TO CONVERSION

**I**N any work regarding converts from Islam the first name to be mentioned must be that of Henry Martyn, a saint of God indeed, and one whose spade work in translation has produced much fruit at the hands of those who followed him. Yet Martyn himself baptised only one Muslim. "Although this man of God had the privilege of baptising forty converts, only one was from Islam. That one was Mullah Sheikh Salih, who took the name of Abdul Masih, and was afterward ordained to the ministry by Bishop Heber."<sup>1</sup> Regarding this man the Rev. C. W. Ranson writes, "Masih is frequently mentioned as the first Indian to be ordained by an Anglican Bishop, but Christian David's ordination took place six months earlier. Abdul Masih was the first convert from Islam to be received into the Anglican Church."<sup>2</sup> This new convert's devotion is indicated by a reference in a work already quoted. "In Agra there is a very beautiful Church building—one of the first of its kind. This was entirely built at the cost of a Mohammedan convert—Abdul Masih—a Jagirdar. He was the first fruits of the Church Missionary Society, and the first and only Indian who has built so handsome a Church all out of his own pocket."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. M. Wherry. "Islam and Christianity in India and the Far East," p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> C. W. Ranson. "The Christian Minister in India," foot note p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Najamuodin. "What a Convert from Islam misses in the Church," p. 55.

One marvels at the faith of Martyn who was content to work on without seeing fruit, and yet with the confidence that his patience and continuance would encourage future missionaries.

The early pioneers of evangelism certainly found that Islam was hard soil for the Christian ploughman, but their faith was courageous, their determination tenacious, and they showed the way to their successors in their concentrated study of Islam in all its aspects. They learned to appreciate the power of Islam over its followers, and the impossibility, from a human point of view, of any large success in such work.

One mountainous difficulty, the Law of Apostasy, has always loomed large, and, in the face of this, every missionary feels the weight of the awful responsibility of persuading an enquirer to accept baptism. A worker of wide experience states that, "It is our conviction that among the many reasons for the small number of converts to the Christian faith in Moslem lands there is, perhaps, none so important, and yet concerning which so little is accurately known, as the Moslem law, regarding apostates—the law of apostasy has become fixed in Islam, and for thirteen centuries has exercised its dread, if not its power, under all conditions in every land."<sup>1</sup>

Most missionaries, including the writer, have had experience of the fear of death which holds back converts; and a college president of Constantinople rightly states that "the fear of death is certainly one cause for the fewness of converts from

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<sup>1</sup> S. M. Zwemer. "The Law of Apostasy in Islam." p. 17.

Islam to Christianity. Every Moslem knows that his life is in danger if he becomes a Christian. I have known a good many instances of Moslems who would secretly assert themselves as Christians, but would make no open statement because of the danger attending."<sup>1</sup>

This law has never been abrogated. The current canon law has it in its entirety, and every convert knows the danger he faces. The writer has known an enquirer, whilst engaged in private conversation about the Christian faith, to be on the verge of fainting when he suddenly realised where he was headed. Even British administration has not succeeded in preventing this death penalty. Open opposition is not always the way. There are methods which are simpler, and more difficult to detect, but just as effective. In the writer's experience two enquirers have been poisoned, though not with fatal results. One young man became mentally unbalanced, and avoided meetings with missionaries; another came very near death, and his health was greatly impaired for some months. Such methods are not unusual either in India or other centres of Islam, as witness the statement of Miss Lilius Trotter: "Here in Algeria our trouble is not so much this open opposition as it is the brain-drugs, or probably hypnotism, which are used to 'will' the converts away. We believe that three fourths of the cases of backsliding might be traced to this source, if the full truth were known."<sup>2</sup>

The Tradition enunciating the Law of Apostacy is quite clear, as is the comment also. Zwemer

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. quoted p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid Quoted p. 27, 28.

quotes from the forty traditions of An-Nawawi thus, "The Apostle of God said the blood of a fellow Moslem should never be shed except in three cases; that of the adulterer, the murderer, and whoever forsakes the religion of Islam." And the comment runs: "he who departs from Islam, becoming disobedient to God and His Apostle, let him be cut off or crucified or destroyed from the earth."<sup>2</sup> Other commentators use no less decisive language.

Death is the punishment to be expected by any apostate, and the Muslim inflicting the penalty considers himself blessed in the deed. A father has been known to arrange that his son be involved in a fatal accident in order to prevent his baptism; and a missionary tells of a case where a young Afridi lad was actually stoned to death by his father because of his faith in Christ.

For the convert from Islam open confession of his faith undoubtedly means readiness to be "faithful unto death." Nothing less will sustain him. Is it any wonder that the missionary often hesitates to press for baptism, and that there are those who insist that demands ought to be tempered according to circumstances? It would be strange if the question did not sometimes arise: Am I right in suggesting baptism and public confession of faith when this entails very real danger to life? Zwemer says very truly: "The catalogue of tortures endured because of faith in God given in the Eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews could be paralleled in the lives of those who have suffered for Christ because they were apostates from Islam. Every one who

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<sup>2</sup> Op. cit. pp. 37, 38.

makes the choice faces the possibilities of loneliness, disinheritance, persecution, and even death."<sup>1</sup>

Such an intolerant law inevitably hinders even honest search for the truth. And it has many allies in the tenets of the religion itself, which creates in its followers a soul-deadening self-satisfaction, the equal of which is hard to find. "If the prescribed practices do not impart much comfort, yet they do bring self-satisfaction, so widespread is the consciousness of possessing in Islam the best religion."<sup>2</sup> Coupled with this is "the Moslem's pride in his own religion, and in the Arabian language as the language of heaven."<sup>3</sup> Kraemer calls it, "a religion that has almost no questions and no answers."<sup>4</sup> It calls forth intense zeal and fanatical enthusiasm which not only encourage self-sacrifice in its defence, but also murderous anger against any apostate or defiler.

The Prophet undoubtedly brought into being a religious system and a brotherhood which resulted in a group solidarity extending beyond even racial barriers. Any step which threatens this solidarity is bound to be withstood by bitter and stubborn resistance, for such a break in the group "implies the explicit recognition of the error of Islam."<sup>5</sup> The Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council 1928 recognised this in the words, "Islamic fraternity as a unifying factor is a real thing, and

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<sup>1</sup> Op cit. p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> "The Missionary Message" 1910. p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 134,

<sup>4</sup> Kraemer. "The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World," p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p. 354.

beyond all other things in Islam gives occasion for meditation and thought to all Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

We must recognise also the vast difference between the high standard of morality demanded by the Christian Way, and the low levels of demand and conduct in the religion of Muhammad. To attain the higher levels must appear, to a Muslim seeker, impossible for any human being. In his old sphere religion and morality are too easily divorced, and thus Islam fails to exert a clean, moral influence over those who profess it. “Slavery and polygamy are recognised by the sacred books, almost unlimited divorce is provided for by the laws of Islam; lying and deception are condoned, and a proud, domineering spirit is encouraged.”<sup>2</sup> And when, over all this, is the dark shadow of fatalism which hinders any sense of moral responsibility, it is easily understandable why Allah, “sterile in his inaccessible height,”<sup>3</sup> lacks moral influence. There is one example and one only which lies like a dead hand upon everything, the life of Muhammad. “Islam, the very religion which arose to protest against the excessive esteeming of any man, ended by binding itself hand and foot, and for all generations, to one man’s dictation, in both private and public life.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, in the face of the text of the Quran, and undoubted historical evidence, the defenders of the Prophet will insist upon the impeccability and purity of his life.

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1 “The Christian Life and Message” 1928. p. 203.

2 E. M. Wherry. “Islam and Christianity in India and the Far East.” p. 119.

3 Ibid p. 122.

4 “The Christian Life and Message” p. 201.

It is no longer considered wise to refer to the weaknesses in Muhammad's moral character, but "the contrast between their dead Prophet, lying in his splendid tomb in Al Medina, and the Christ who rose triumphant from the grave, and lives to make perpetual intercession, is found, time after time. to strike Muslims very forcibly."<sup>1</sup>

Reform movements have sprung up in most Islamic centres, but the main aim is political supremacy and religious zeal rather than the awakening in men of real spiritual life, and a desire to honour God by clean living. It is true there are worthy men who have endeavoured to find in obscure passages of the Quran something approaching the teaching of the Gospel, but the very core of Islam, Muhammad himself, has always made any such effort useless.

It is obvious that in such an atmosphere recognition of sin must be wholly inadequate. In a heart hardened by fatalism, and unaware of any burden of sin, there can be no immediate awakening to spiritual need. Zwemer rightly calls the awakening of a sense of sin, "the first essential in all missionary service." He continues, "If we present Christ as He is in the Gospel, the contrast is so evident that the comparison is made by the Mohammedan himself."<sup>2</sup> Yet this striking contrast serves sometimes to discourage the seeker, who finds "it is comparatively easy to achieve its (Islam's) ideals, whilst the Christian ideals, with their high standard of morals,

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> "The Missionary Message" Vol. IV. p. 148.



are far removed from possible attainment by the average man."<sup>1</sup>

Large among the obstacles in the path of approach is the rock of Islamic doctrine. "The fundamental tenet of Islam is the Unity of God, and the doctrine of the Trinity appears to him to teach tritheism, to be a relapse into polytheism—The Divine sonship of Jesus is also a difficulty, as the Moslem cannot conceive the Incarnation unless carnally—The Moslem doctrine of God makes the Cross an offence—because it seems "to imply impotence to intervene on the part of God."<sup>2</sup> This spurning of the Divine Fatherhood is a serious lack in Islam, making impossible any close relationship between the Allah who is inaccessible, and the world which he rules by an arbitrary law and an iron-stern hand. There is, however, a favourable consequence of this which is pointed out by a Cairo missionary: "Though the orthodox Moslem—finds considerable satisfaction in the punctilious performance of the requirements of Islam, and also infinite consolation in his fatalistic belief in the sovereignty of God, yet I think the mass of the people turn to Zikr (*i.e.* the mystic practices of the invocation of God) in their attempts to meet the higher needs of their religious natures."<sup>3</sup> This turning from cold legalities and an austere Almighty to the warmth of fellowship with a God who is near will be illustrated in cases of conversions referred to later. The experience of scores might be summarised in the words of one of

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<sup>1</sup> L. Creighton, "Missions, Their Rise and Development." p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> "The Missionary Message" Vol. IV p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 128.

India's sons: "the hunger of heart for Him was awakened in me by the study of books on Islamic mysticism. The result of it was a growing dissatisfaction with the form of religion based on legalism."<sup>1</sup>

The religion of the Prophet is inadequate to meet the deepest religious needs of mankind, and many have turned to find spiritual satisfaction in the ideal which is expressed in the Incarnate Christ. He it is Who is the lodestar drawing all men unto Him, and, though we may list many factors attracting converts to Christianity, the centre of interest, the magnetic field, is the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Subhan, "How a Sufi found His Lord." p. 9.

## HELPS TO CONVERSION

**A**N examination of the stories of conversions reveals several outstanding factors which led to acceptance of the Saviourhood of Christ. There is not a great deal of biographical material as a source, but more than a score of converts' stories have been culled from reports, books on missionary work, and personal experience, and, in all except two or three cases, it has been possible to discover the main influence which set their faces towards Christianity. The outstanding feature in fifty per cent of these experiences is the profound influence of the reading of the Bible. These converts testify unhesitatingly to the opening of their spiritual eyes through the study of the Word of God, often without the guidance of a human teacher.

Zwemer, writing of secret disciples, says, "The majority of those I have known found Him through the study of the Word, and not because of direct missionary activity."<sup>1</sup> In similar vein another writes, "When Moslems come out and ask for baptism, the most common reason assigned for their change of faith is the reading of the Bible or some religious tract or book."<sup>2</sup> And the Rev. W. Hooper at a Cairo Conference of Muslim workers asserted, "I know of no better advice to give a Moslem enquirer than this: Read the whole Old and New Testaments, and

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<sup>1</sup> "Zwemer. "Law of Apostacy in Islam" p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> F. M. Wherry. "Islam and Christianity in India and the Far East." p. 142.

then the Quran right through, in strict order as they stand, thoughtfully and, above all, prayerfully."<sup>1</sup>

Christian workers have, without doubt, a powerful weapon to hand in the Sword of the Spirit. The Muslim has affinity with *Ahl i Kitab*, and certain verses of the Quran enjoin upon him the duty of at least knowing the Book of the Christian faith. Prejudices and preconceived ideas abound in the reader's mind, but the Holy Spirit of God deals with these through the Revelation, and many eyes are opened to see the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Bishop J. A. Subhan makes it clear that it was the reading of the Gospel rather than the teaching or preaching of any man which showed him Christ. "The second reading of the Gospel produced in me the deep conviction that it was *the* true 'Injil.' It was God's Word and His Revelation—The effect produced on the mind by its reading was so very different from that of the recitation of the Quran. —in the Injil I found something which spoke to my soul."<sup>2</sup>

In contrast is the different effect the Word has had on others, but producing similar results. One young Muslim testifies, "It was during this time of agnosticism that certain verses from the Bible would come into my mind and would absolutely take away my peace."<sup>3</sup> One of the leaders of the Church, still living and working in North India, tells of his con-

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1 "Methods of Missionary Work among Moslems" Cairo 1906 p. 181.

2 J. A. Subhan. "How a Sufi found His Lord" p. 19.

3 D. P. Thomson. "How I found Christ." p. 69.

version through the reading of the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> First readings were with a critical eye which sought for arguments and points to be used in debates with Christian preachers. Later on he formed societies for the defence of Islam, but there came a day when, after a thorough examination and comparison of the Quran, the Hadith, and the New Testament, he stood in the midst of one of those groups to make confession of his faith in Jesus Christ.

The power of this written Word to accomplish the impossible is amazing. Missionaries the world over have related stories of miracles wrought by this instrument, but none is more thrilling than that concerning two Arab nobles told by Zwemer. These two men became close friends, but when one of them, Abdalla, became a Christian after reading the Arabic Bible, the other, Sabat, denounced him without hesitation, and stood by to witness his torture and execution in Bokhara. "Remorse drove Sabat to long wanderings—At Vizagapatam he fell in with a copy of the Arabic New Testament—He compared it with the Koran, the truth fell on him 'like a flood of light,' and he sought baptism in Madras. When the news reached his family in Arabia his brother set out to destroy him, and, disguised as an Asiatic, wounded him with a dagger."<sup>2</sup> The writer tells elsewhere of being allowed to land at Yembo, the port of Medina, after considerable difficulty. He was amazed to find that the man whose persuasive intercession had made a landing possible, was a

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<sup>1</sup> S. M. Paul, "Why I became a Christian" (Hindi translation).

<sup>2</sup> Zwemer. "The Law of Apostacy in Islam." p. 101

secret believer. "He showed us his Bible, and then told us how, after reading Matthew's Gospel, he had baptized himself in obedience to the command of Christ before he ever met a missionary or a Christian worker!"<sup>1</sup>

This introduction of the follower of Islam to the Christian Bible is all-important, and no worker can afford to neglect its use in attracting men to Christ. The evangelistic use, and even the handling of the printed Word, need the utmost care in view of the Muslim's reverent attitude to his copy of the Quran. As Christians we do not give the almost-idolatrous reverence to the Bible such as Muslims accord to their own book, but it is at least necessary to do such honour to our Scriptures as will lead our hearers to recognise the supreme value we place upon them. This point is well illustrated by the experience of a converted maulvi whom the writer baptised. This young man, when reading in a Christian High School, joined a voluntary Bible class in the principal's room, and was deeply impressed by the missionary's reverent handling and reading of the Sacred Word. The Bible class leader's copy was kept in a velvet case, and, when he read from the well-cared-for Book, it was obvious that he placed the highest value upon, and gave all possible honour to, this Revelation. This attitude in handling a book may be considered a trifling consideration to many, but those of experience in India will no doubt endorse it thoroughly. The point, however, is that, in this case, it so impressed the young man that he began to study the New Testament, and in later years testi-

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 122.

fied that this was the beginning of his approach to Christ.

Truly Henry Martyn and his successors built upon the best foundation by their translation of the Written Word into the languages of the Muslim, and by their efforts they have become the spiritual parents of many. According to the promise of God, the Word has not returned "void," but become fruitful in numerous lives, many of them still believers in secret, but finding their spiritual food in this Revelation.

In view of the present-day trend away from debate with Muslims, a method much used by the pioneers of past days, it is interesting to note the number of stalwart converts who were won to Christ by such argumentation. "A. C.M.S. missionary and first principal of St. John's College, Agra, French, side by side with Dr. Pfander, conducted the famous debate which issued in the conversion of Imad-ud-Din, D.D. of Lambeth, the great literary champion of the Church at Amritsar."<sup>1</sup> And, in another source, the number of conversions is given as two: "Not many years after (the debate) two of the moulvies, who had then for the first time heard the arguments in favour of Christianity came forward for baptism, and—spent their lives as consistent Christians."<sup>2</sup> Such men became leaders of the Church, and it is interesting to read that "the great champion for the Christian faith was the late Maulvie Imad-ud-din, D.D., of Amritsar, who claimed descent from a royal

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<sup>1</sup> "The Call from the Moslem World" 1926, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> L. Creighton. "Missions Their Rise and Development" p. 135.

family of Persia, and whose religious life was much influenced by the addresses and writings of Dr. Pfander. He was baptised in 1866, and ordained in 1868, and devoted his whole life to preaching and writing upon the Mohammedan controversy. His works number more than a score of volumes, of which twelve are addressed to Moslems, including a life of Mohammed, and an Urdu translation of the Quran——Dr. Imaduddin lived to see the day when intelligent Moslem writers practically abandoned most of the arguments and objections against Christianity which he and others have so ably refuted.”<sup>1</sup>

Another maulvi, living in Delhi, “a man of marked intellectual ability——brought up at the feet of the Gamaliel of Indian Mohammedans”<sup>2</sup> was led to inquire into the claims of Christianity after discussions in a mosque with a missionary of the S.P.G. These friendly debates were underlined by preaching in the open bazar, and, though the harvest was delayed for some years, the reaping time came. “The missionaries were unaware that their words had had effect. They ‘cast their bread upon the waters’ to find it again after eight years when Gul-Mahomed, having quietly secured and read such Christian literature as he could obtain, presented himself as an inquirer asking for baptism; Easter Eve of 1900 he was received into the Christian Church.”<sup>3</sup> Later reports refer to this new convert’s being prepared for Holy Orders.

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<sup>1</sup> Wherry. “Islam and Christianity in India and the Far East.” pp. 164, 166.

<sup>2</sup> “The Story of the Delhi Mission” 1908 p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 37.



A Christian worker, known to the writer, had experience of a youth in a zenana who, primed constantly with stock questions given him by maulvis, badgered her at every visit and insisted upon replies to his queries. This continual opposition was often a great nuisance, but answers were given politely and carefully, often in detail after study of the difficulty. However, it appeared that the boy was never convinced, and he returned time after time to the attack until the missionary, whose patience was becoming exhausted, would gladly have ceased her visits had it not been for the spiritual need of the young man's sister whom she was teaching. The fruit came after a number of years when, after degree studies at Ali-garh University, this young man came to the writer, and began a series of regular visits for prayer and reading of the Scriptures. Though still unbaptised he is undoubtedly a sincere Christian, and he testifies to the fact that the patient discussions and response of the missionary lady pointed out the Way of Life to him, and started him upon serious thinking which eventually led him to faith in Christ. He had been deeply impressed by the fact that the Christian worker had never side-stepped any issue, had sometimes offered to study the question before replying, and had ever been courteous to one who was very much her junior.

A study of debates shows that those which proved fruitful were usually informal and friendly, without bitterness or belligerent attack one upon the other. They often led to personal conversations and discussions, which were further encouraged by bazar preaching. Though replies were not always con-

sidered adequate, the patience and sympathy shown were, on many occasions, more effective. The testimony of a Sheikh Othman boy illustrates this: "the Christians were never baffled, as far as I remember; and our arguments were answered sympathetically, though not always to our satisfaction."<sup>1</sup>

Next in our consideration must come the factor which emphasises Scripture's references to the spreading of the leaven of righteousness, Christians as "the salt of the earth," and "lights in the darkness." The testimony of lives under the influence of Jesus Christ has attracted many, and in numerous cases it has carried more weight than the actual teaching given. The importance of personal witness backed by holy living cannot be over-estimated. Dr. Alter, commenting upon the deductions from answers to a questionnaire, writes, "As to the chief cause of attraction to Christianity, the importance of the practical life of Christians, and the excellence of the religion of Jesus Christ itself held about equal place, with a slight preponderance of influence to that of the personal lives."<sup>2</sup>

Recent conversation with a young Muslim convert revealed experience in agreement with this. He told of an Indian Christian preacher whose path crossed his own on many occasions, by chance it seemed. Almost always it appeared that the preacher's actions or words irritated, and the response on the part of the Muslim was a flood of invective, and abuse of a particularly vile type. But it was never answered in kind. No matter how provoking or

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<sup>1</sup> D. P. Thomson. "How I Found Christ." p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Alter. "A study of the Experiences of Converts" p. 2.

foul the words against him the minister of the Gospel showed a meek humility which astounded all around, and particularly confounded the abuser! He confessed that he became profoundly uneasy and ashamed, and eventually sought out the one he had reviled, and enquired the source of such moral power. The Galilean had again conquered, not through powerful logic or argument, but through patience and humility under stress.

The Rev. Imam Bakhsh Bawa, son of a Khoja family, in his conversion story,<sup>1</sup> confesses to a decidedly uneasy conscience after observing the patient attitude of a Christian preacher whom he bitterly reviled. This impression was further deepened by his reception at a Bible depot which he visited to obtain a copy of the Scriptures. The humility, sincerity, and friendliness of the Christian salesman prepared the way for the Kingdom of God in Imam Bakhsh's life, and made his heart more susceptible to the message.

Others have testified to the profound impression made upon them by the holiness and purity of the lives of certain Christian workers. Maulvi Safdar Ali, an Inspector of Schools in Jubbulpore District, "was won by a catechist named William who displayed a Christlike character of forgiveness, and was ready to preach Christ and Him crucified under any circumstances."<sup>2</sup> This convert later enriched the life of the Church with a collection of sacred songs, many of them his own composition; and, in a

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<sup>1</sup> Imam Bakhsh Bawa. "My Conversion" (Hindi version).

<sup>2</sup> "Lucknow 1911" p. 87.

book called 'Niaz Namah' "addressed his dear friends, and used the persuasive tone born of love and a strong desire to bring them to a knowledge of the Saviour of men."<sup>1</sup>

During the conference of missionaries to Muslims in Lucknow, 1911 reference was also made to Maulvi Hissam-ud-din who "was brought to Christ by Baba Padmanji's saintly character."<sup>2</sup>

Books on work among Muslims constantly emphasise the vital need for workers whose personal devotion, holiness of living, and readiness for self-sacrifice are apparent. The life lived is a constant challenge to Islam. In recent days the writer heard of a sincere Muslim who confessed to deep perplexity about the future life after death of a certain missionary who, though not a follower of the Prophet, possessed all the virtues sought after in Islam!

As already noted, the excellence of the Christian religion holds almost equal place with personal example as a factor drawing men to Christ. Converts have given testimony to the attraction of "vital relation to a living person rather than a creed; the true Christian's privilege of children rather than the involuntary bondage of slaves; the teaching of forbearance and love, even of passive suffering rather than active persecution; the teaching of social purity and holiness—and, even more than the teaching, the purity of the character and life of Christ as contrasted with that of other founders of religion; the conception of God as Father——; a conception

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<sup>1</sup> Wherry. "The Muslim Controversy" p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> "Lucknow 1911" p. 87.

of the terribleness of sin in the sight of a Holy God; the assurance of salvation; brotherhood; truthful living; independence of thought; the value of human personality.”<sup>1</sup> This quotation is given at some length, for it boldly summarises all the points, and is based solely upon a searching questionnaire addressed to prominent converts of some years standing. Such evidence is of the utmost value, and gives clear guidance in the choice of subjects to be emphasised in teaching. It also indicates the importance of a positive preaching of Christ and His Way, with the assurance that in such searching light the darkness will be more apparent. Controversy and argument will be unnecessary, and any uneasy questions in the minds of the hearers will be best answered in private conversation. Yet not all seekers are conscious of the contrasts, for some see only the glory of the Light and are irresistibly drawn to it, like the young man who said, “It was not because of the shortcomings of Islam that I became a Christian, but because I opened my mind to Christ, I received Him, and found in Him true liberty.”<sup>2</sup> And again: “The more I heard and read about Christ the more I loved Him—the more freedom of thought and mind I received, and the more I desired to identify myself with Him.”<sup>3</sup>

Such a presentation of Christ was stressed by an experienced missionary in an address to the Cairo Conference of 1906, in the words, “If we will stop wasting our ammunition and our strength in effort

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<sup>1</sup> Alter “A Study of the Experiences of Converts” p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> D. P. Thomson. “How I found Christ” p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 21

to make trinitarian doctrine intelligible and acceptable to Moslem unitarians, and give all our strength to a presentation to Mohammedans whenever they will lend us their ears, of the life and character of Jesus the Christ, we shall find a response more ready and more hearty than many of us dare hope for."<sup>1</sup>

Christ's ineffable purity and holiness are beacons which blaze brightly in the darkness, and they must bring about conviction of sin, the lack of which has often formed the subject of missionary reports. A legalist religion, with a God whose arbitrary will decrees whatever he pleases, is not likely to exert any high moral influence; and a worker describes a certain group of Muhammadans as showing "a total lack of appreciation of the nature of sin, and of a moral law of itself holy."<sup>2</sup> Bishop Subhan adds his own testimony in the words, "When I was a Muslim sin meant to me merely an external act to which God had attached a sinful result, which, as a consequence of it, I was to suffer in hell. In other words, sin was not essentially evil, but only evil by God's decree."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to show the contrast in his attitude when he came into new life in Christ. "On accepting Christ as my Saviour I came to know the true nature of sin, and that it was something essentially evil, and a rebellion against God—its chief consequences lay in separation from God, and death to the soul, and destruction of all that is pure, holy, and good."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Methods of Mission Work among Moslems" p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> "The Missionary Message" Vol. IV, p. 135

<sup>3</sup> Subhan. "How a Sufi found His Lord" p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

The sinfulness of sin, God's abhorrence of it, and its opposition to righteousness are concepts which most Muslims are incapable of recognising; and here we have an explanation of the question often asked, sometimes, it seems, rather cynically: What is sin?

Yet we must not fail to acknowledge that, in spite of all we have said, there are many worthy souls in Islam only too conscious of its deficiency, and the inadequacy of its provision for life. One of these testifies that "the most attractive feature was the provision made by Christianity for a personal salvation."<sup>1</sup> and another says it was "the power for holy living" which drew him, "the powerful preaching which encourages men to repent and to live a life without reproach, and to be perfect before God——. It was not only the sense of sin, but also the desire to know the truth and to be freed by its knowledge, the desire to worship God in the highest and best way, which opened to me the portals into His Temple and His service."<sup>2</sup>

The message Christians have to present is a magnificently attractive one. Christianity is Christ, and as He is "lifted up" so He draws all men to Himself. "It is the unanimous opinion of missionaries that the greatest attraction of Christianity is Christ Himself, and that all the features of His life, teaching, and work, in greater or lesser degree, draw Moslems."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The Missionary Message" Vol. IV, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p. 147.

The power of the Christian worker's weapons has been stressed in all conferences of missionaries. We face an Islam which is totally inadequate for the spiritual needs of its followers, and if we will but utilise to the full the vast resources placed at our disposal by our Heavenly Leader, we shall find that the evangelisation of the Muhammadan World is within our power.

Finally, we must refer to the type of work which is sometimes called "indirect evangelism," but which is often a more direct approach to the human heart than any straight preaching. Through medical and social work, and the intimate approach to pardah women by means of zenana visiting, doors have been opened, hearts touched, and the way prepared for the message of Salvation. It is a fact of the writer's own experience that hospital work, with contacts very often made and maintained by visits to the homes, has changed the attitude of a whole city. The love and sympathy which issue in practical help never fail to make hearts sensitive to exposure to the Christian message. One of the outstanding Muslim converts of North India, a man of wide learning, and unusual gifts as a preacher and lecturer, states that a visit to a Mission Hospital, and the reading of Scripture verses printed on the back of his prescription paper were the first factors in his approach to the Saviour. Such practical expression of Christian faith as given in medical work must inevitably prove to be a battering ram shattering fatalistic beliefs, and clearing away suspicion and prejudice. The words of a Hindu to a missionary might well be put into the mouth of a Muslim: "We



do not greatly fear your schools, we need not send our children. We do not much fear your preaching, we need not listen; but we fear your women, and we dread your doctors, for your doctors are winning our hearts, and your women are winning our homes, and when our hearts and our homes are won what is there left of us?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. Creighton. "Missions Their Rise and Development." p. 120.

## PROBLEMS AFTER BAPTISM

THE difficulties of the approach to Christianity are, without doubt, legion, but, having cut himself off from Islam by baptism, and faced unlimited risks and penalties in so doing, the convert invariably finds that his problems appear to have increased, and, unless he has been forewarned, he is appalled to find, not only a cold welcome in the new brotherhood, but even open hostility. His hopes and expectations are not realised, and only in rare cases does he find the example of Christlike living which he imagined was typical of the members of the Church. This problem, which is one peculiar to the experience of Muslim converts, is one which must be faced. It must be brought out into the light, and freely discussed. Such a cancerous growth cannot be permitted to endanger the witness of the Church, as it does when it labels Muslim converts as doubtful adherents, and, either forces them to return whence they came, or segregates them in a Christo-Islamic ghetto where their trials are magnified by bitter discussion and accusation against Christians as a whole.

Let us examine this evil thing, and seek to find the exorcising word which will banish it for ever. Recognition of the urgency of the problems our Muslim converts face will enable us to suggest plans to solve them.

Listen to the complaint of a Punjab convert. "Nor does a convert find a real fellow feeling, a

brotherhood in the Church—they turn a cold shoulder to all such, and treat them with an indifference that drives them away back again to their homes.”<sup>1</sup>

This lack of welcome is a common complaint. No enthusiasm is shown in most places when such a conquest is made, and it is no cause for wonder that the convert, miserable and disheartened, is inclined to wish he had never forsaken his old religion which had, at least, some reality of brotherhood. Such backsliding undoubtedly occurs. Muslim converts do go back. But it is ironical that even Christian leaders (of non-Muslim background) make it their chief complaint that Muhammadan converts never stand firm, when they themselves make no effort to integrate them into the Christian fellowship, but rather repel them. That this attitude is no local affair, but widespread wherever there is a Church largely recruited from non-Islamic sources, is obvious from an examination of literature on the subject. The Right Rev. Wilson Cash writes, “In areas where Hinduism prevails the Moslem convert is often looked upon with suspicion, and racial bitterness carried over into the Church is a barrier to progress in Moslem evangelisation.”<sup>2</sup> The Rev. R. McCheyne Patterson labels this “a painful truth.” Canon W. Gairdner, in an address to the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council in 1928, said, “It is a common experience to find Christians who disbelieve utterly in the possibility

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<sup>1</sup> Najamuddin. “What a Convert from Islam Misses in the Church.” pp. 29, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted *ibid.* p. 3.

of converting Muslims at all.”<sup>1</sup> A similar statement had been made four years previously in the meeting of the I. M. C. Conference of Christian workers among Moslems, and was worded thus: “In some areas the Christians (not Moslem converts) have frequently shown themselves unsympathetic towards Moslem enquirers and converts.”<sup>2</sup>

In more recent days the Rev. L. Bevan Jones has put the matter very plainly. “To those who know the facts of the case there obtrudes upon one’s notice what can only be spoken of as a grave problem for the Christian Church. The problem is no new one, nor is it in fact peculiar to the state of things in India. It is enough just to mention two distressing features, and the thing at once confronts us: (1) The Christian Church in Orient lands as a whole, and as a rule, does not cordially welcome the convert from Islam. (2) The Convert himself not infrequently feels lonely in the new community because he finds he is not wanted. We feel sure that, in the last analysis, this state of things will come to be seen by all sincere followers of Christ as a serious reproach to the Christian Church.”<sup>3</sup>

For a convert to leave the fold in which he was born, to give up loved ones, friends, and possessions, to risk life itself, and then to discover, in his new sphere, that he is an object of suspicion, it is a sore trial to faith, and the marvel is that so many have endured to the end, and even won their way

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<sup>1</sup> “Christian Life and Message” p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> “Conference of Christian Workers among Muslims” p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> L. Bevan Jones. “The People of the Mosque” p. 325.

into the hearts of those who first looked askance at them.

This prevalent attitude is, the writer believes, rooted in the inborn antipathy between the religions. At least this appears to be true in India. This suspicion is rationalised by the levelling of charges against Muslim converts in general. That these sometimes have foundation in fact must be conceded, but they are not peculiar to those who have come from Islam. Those who make the accusations rarely have any facts or figures to substantiate them, and it is obvious that such attitudes are not based upon experience, but upon a mental antipathy which seems to be an actual part of the psychological make-up.

However, let us note the charges, and examine their relevancy and value. The most general one is that Muslim converts inevitably backslide, forsaking Christ, and returning to Islam. This "openly expressed opinion that sooner or later the convert will apostatise"<sup>1</sup> has been called "the unkindest cut of all"<sup>1</sup> One of these converts asks, "When they look around at their present miserable plight, distrusted by all the brethren, dishonoured by friend as well as foe, is it a wonder that some of them, being weak, are disheartened, and become so hopeless that they go back whence they came?"<sup>2</sup> He goes on to make a very apt comment on the fact that, since the Arya Samaj movement has made return to Hinduism possible, "the cases of apostacy from among Hindu converts have outnumbered those from Moslem

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. pp. 327, 328.

<sup>2</sup> Najamuddin, "What a Convert from Islam Misses etc" p. 35.

converts, and have been quite frequent."<sup>1</sup> This is probably true, yet the Christian community in general is adamant in believing otherwise, and no ordinary arguments appear to be powerful enough to persuade them to readjust their thinking in accord with facts. Enmity and suspicion of this quality are so widespread in the thought-life of the Church that nothing short of a large-scale "campaign" can hope to begin the process of eradication. However, we must not anticipate our conclusions, but proceed to examine further the details of the charges which create the suspicion.

One of the main accusations is that the converts are sensually-minded, and bring with them Muslim views of women-folk; and linked with this very often is the conviction that the real motive for conversion is a desire to find a Christian wife. That there is some occasion for such a charge cannot be denied, and certain converts have given reason for doubt. As a well-known friend of Muslim converts has said, "He gives up the broad and not-too-exacting way of life in Islam for the narrow and more circumspect way of Christian living. He is aware that he is now committed to a measure of self-control and self-denial such as was not required of him, and was not practised by him while a Muslim"<sup>2</sup> He goes on, "the convert will be the first to confess that he is apt to bring over with him into the new society certain undesirable, and even unlovely, features, and precisely because the normal standard of life in Islam is lower than the normal standard

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> L. Beuan Jones 'The People of the Mosque' p. 327.

in the Church of Christ. On their own confession the more noticeable of these are extravagance, lack of self-control, a passionate nature, with little of meekness and practical foresight."<sup>1</sup>

Islam has upon it the mortmain of Muhammad. His standard of living is still the example for his followers, and the concessions he made to the wild and passionate nature of the Arab still hold good for the orthodox. Certain Traditions regarding the Prophet's personal life are said to be quite unfit for public reading, but they set the norm for Islamic life. One result is seen in the fact that the holiest city of pilgrimage has been described as the most immoral city in the world. Coming as they do from such an atmosphere it is not surprising that some converts do not find it easy straightway to walk a narrow path, and to reach a much higher level of thought and practice. But surely this is true of all who turn from darkness to light, of all who have seen the fulness of God in Jesus Christ, of all Prodigal Sons who turn from the feeding troughs of the swine to return to the Father's home! That some have failed to reach higher levels may be a reflection upon those who claim to be Christian, rather than a basis of accusation. We must recognise the great distance between the Prophet of Arabia and the Saviour. "The inadequacy of Islam to meet the deepest spiritual needs of mankind is to be measured by the difference between an ideal which finds its highest expression in Mohammed, and one which is incarnated in Christ; and for those who have seen Jesus Christ that difference is a difference of worlds."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit. p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> "The Call from the Moslem World" 1926. p. 16.

A former Muslim lists as one of the Islamic virtues "a noble pride—an independent spirit," and in this we may find the germ of the contention that these converts are arrogant, self-willed, and quarrelsome. Again we must go back to the foundations. Islam was conceived in Arabia amidst a fierce, war-like, independent people for whom all outsiders were enemies, whose inferiority and subordination were taken for granted. And, though many followers of the Prophet can claim no blood relation with the Arab race, they have been inoculated with that same arrogant pride which was the driving power of the armies of the Crescent which very nearly succeeded in subduing Europe and Asia. It is the inevitable psychological result of, among other things, the constant repetition, day after day, and several times a day, of the Islamic creed. It is the spirit which, starting from blind intolerance, fills the Muslim with a flaming missionary spirit, and arms him with a sword to compel those whose inferior mentality still bows down to other deities. It is also a pride which boasts of a brotherhood overriding all barriers of colour and race, a brotherhood which shames many of the claims of the Christian Church. Let us admit, it is often true that a Muhammadan convert has what he calls a noble pride, and the Christian accuser calls arrogance, but let us also recognise that he is forsaking that in which he boasted, only to find that in his new surroundings there is very little missionary zeal, a lack of spiritual fire, and often times no sense of brotherhood and fellowship where differences of race and face do not count.



One of them has pointed out the lack of evangelistic zeal in the Christian Church, and its weakness compared with the propagating fervour of the Muslim. He continues, "The Church is not an evangelising body, nor do these people realize the responsibility of passing on to others the supreme blessings which have been bestowed upon themselves."<sup>1</sup> The writer well remembers talking with a young Muslim convert who was then preparing for ordination at a theological college. Together with deep spiritual faith in Christ he combined an almost belligerent missionary spirit. He contended that if the Church would only concentrate upon work among Muslims the resulting converts would form the vanguard of a missionary army which would speedily win the whole of India for Christ. Such fervour may well be the fruit of a noble pride, and the Church stands in need of such stalwart additions to its ranks. The pride and independence of which many complain can become, in a sympathetic atmosphere, sturdy strength; but the lack of understanding and consideration too often exaggerate and intensify the more arrogant side of these virtues. The Church must examine herself through the eyes of the new-comer, who "comes, often enough, with high hopes, and surely in this he is justified. He looks to find as keen a devotion to the faith, as real a brotherhood among believers, and a like unselfishness in the Christian Church as that which he knew in Islam. But frequently, to his profound amazement, he discovers an absence of

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<sup>1</sup> Najamuddin "What a Convert Misses, etc" p. 27

deep spirituality, nothing really to take the place of the 'prayers' said five times daily—he marvels that there is so little evangelistic zeal—he soon comes to feel that many of the Christians look upon him with something uncommonly like suspicion." <sup>1</sup>

Anyone who has had the experience of introducing into the Christian Church a convert from Islam knows the vicious circle, such as that described already, which one fights against in trying to make the process of integration easy. There are faults on both sides, but whereas the new Christian comes with hopes set high, and an eager desire for fellowship, the community is already persuaded and grounded in its suspicious attitude, and instead of open hearts and homes the greeting consists of cold shoulders and unsympathetic faces. Mr. Bevan Jones rightly contends that, "what the convert looks for, and has a right to expect from the followers of Christ, is not status or emoluments, but understanding and sympathy, consideration and kindness."<sup>2</sup> Here we must admit that some have had a heart-warming experience, and it has been noted that such an integration has been possible wherever converts have been forewarned of difficulties, and have faced them with courage and determination, prepared to ignore suspicion, and to show, on their own part, a friendly desire for fellowship. Dr. Alter discovered this in the results of his enquiries. "Some have only the happiest memories of those associations, whilst others felt that the Christians were their greatest

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<sup>1</sup> L. Bevan Jones "The People of the Mosque" p. 327

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 328

stumbling blocks and strongest opponents.—It is very noticeable that the three who definitely felt that they had become easily integrated into the Christian community were the very three who—showed themselves of a social and friendly spirit.”<sup>1</sup> To quote once more from this interesting study: “Those, however, who made a more positive effort of friendship, who took the initiative, made the advances, are the ones who reported also having become a real part of the community.”<sup>2</sup>

This first stage of the new life is vitally important, as experience shows very clearly that if the convert fails to establish associations with Christians in this period he will probably remain a lonely soul in the Church unless, in despair, he returns to Islam.

Both personal experience and the literary material available indicate that if we are to build these converts firmly into the fabric of the Body of Christ we must pay particular attention to the critical days following baptism. This is true of all “babes in Christ,” but surely nowhere is it more vital than in the case of the convert from Islam. Very few have escaped the troubles we have mentioned, even though they have been anticipated. One of them “pleads that a kind of help be given for this time such as he himself was denied—sympathy, prayer, and Christian association. He had found particularly hard the loneliness and worldly shame of his new life.”<sup>3</sup> This longing for spiritual fellowship,

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<sup>1</sup> Alter. “Study of the Experiences of Converts” pp. 5,6

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 7

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4

and intense appreciation of prayer with a fellow-Christian are worthy of notice. It is an aspect appearing in many a story of conversion. Experienced missionaries have laid stress upon it in a book of guidance for those who instruct enquirers. "The most noteworthy feature of the lessons is the care taken in the training of the catechumen's prayer life simultaneously with each advance in knowledge of the Gospel truth.—In these lessons the prayers and meditation suggested are of equal importance with the information by reading.—Teacher and pupil will pray together before they part, and the pupil will know that his teacher prays for him every day, as will also those members of the Church appointed to keep a loving watch over the difficult days of his catechumenate."<sup>1</sup>

An outstanding convert testifies to the wonderful help such fellowship proved in the days of instruction. His own words express this so vividly that they are given without alteration: "It continued to be Mr. Steinthal's practice never to leave me without prayer, and at every visit I looked forward to the moment when we would kneel together and pray. The value of prayer was one of the most precious lessons that the Lord taught me through him."<sup>2</sup>

A definite course of instruction, a regular class, a well-thought-out plan for study, opportunities for prayer—all these find a place in suggestions based upon experience, and prayer is well to the forefront always. Is this the answer to the former

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<sup>1</sup> Gairdner & Padwick. "Book of Instructions for Catechumens." p. V. XII. XIII

<sup>2</sup> Subhan. "How a Sufi Found His Lord." p. 32

Muslim's craving for something to fill the place once occupied by the five-times-daily prayer exercises? Here then seems to be a possible argument for the restoration, in a new form, of the ancient devotional "Hours," or the instruction of new converts in a School of Prayer.

Emphasis is laid also upon the need for the cultivation of brotherhood by the linking up of new units with the old, possibly by the setting of the probationer in close contact with a selected Christian family which would undertake some of the necessary teaching and also play the part of introducer to the community in general. The Church should take an interest in the newcomer, and the Church Committee ought to be consulted at each step. This is, the writer considers, the crux of the whole matter, and will need consideration in our findings. It ought, however, to be pointed out that actual personal experience in the relating of the convert to a Christian family does not show convincing success. The case in mind was almost wrecked by such a connection. The family at first basked in the bright light of the new convert's courage, and took credit for the fresh addition to the Christian ranks; but when their plans for rigid control of the newcomers were rightly resented they spurned them, and began a campaign of slander and vilification against them. It is admitted that this is an extreme case, but it indicates the danger of such a plan, and the necessity for very great care in the choice of such sponsors. And such relationship must come from the family's side, not in any sense of charity or patronage, but

with true and devoted Christian love which accepts the service as a sacred trust.

At this point we should remind ourselves of one peculiarity of work among Muslims which complicates the plans mentioned above, i.e. the absolute secrecy often imperative for the convert's safety. Such secrecy makes it sometimes impossible to introduce the enquirer to the members of the Church lest by so doing we imperil his life. The danger cannot be overestimated. It is very real, and he who guides a son of Islam in his search for truth has a terrible responsibility which he dare not take lightly, even in these twentieth century days. Yet, in view of the tragedies caused by lack of integration, it may be considered a lesser risk to break secrecy, to introduce the candidate for baptism to Church members, and to commend him to their prayers and care.

Another helpful plan in solving the problem has been tried, in some instances successfully. This is the scheme for a Converts, Home, a guest-house for enquirers and converts needing accommodation and hospitality. Many who have had sad experience of the loneliness and strangeness of the post-baptism period strongly advise the establishment of a central home of some kind, a place where the new convert can be given instruction and guidance in Bible study and prayer, introduced into Christian circles, and, if need be, helped to find employment. Such practical sympathy, to which the convert has a right based upon our own Scriptures, has much to commend it, and St. Andrew's Brotherhood in Lahore has evidence to prove its value.

## A SPIRITUAL HOME

THIS study has made one central point clear, at least to the writer, and it is this: that, though qualified specialists may take the lead, work among Muslims, in all its stages, must have support of the Church as a whole. Evangelism, and both pre-and post-baptism instruction must be the accepted task of the Church, not just the work of an individual who feels called to it. At every step in dealings with an enquirer the representatives of the Christian body ought to be consulted. This, of course, takes for granted a new zeal and enthusiasm for such work, and a sympathy for it which, at the moment, is not evident in India. An expert, in correspondence with the writer, comments, "The fault of most Muslim evangelism is that it is done by the individual missionary and not by the Church, and this means that the convert is not so acceptable to the Church as he ought to be."<sup>1</sup> He goes on to say that his own Church is stressing this matter, and a group in a southern area of India is seeking to become bi-lingual in order to evangelise Muslim neighbours. This is a step in the right direction, and an example worth emulation.

Another worker makes the argument clearer when he writes, 'The greatest problem of Islamic evangelisation, as I see it, is the preparation of a Church to take care of the harvest that the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> J. W. Sweetman in a recent letter.

seems to have ready. No Church will ever be prepared to take care of a harvest until it takes part in winning that harvest. If Mohammedan evangelistic work is to be done chiefly by paid specialists we shall continue to see a dead, cold Church freezing out the spiritual babes that are occasionally brought in and handed over by the missionary."<sup>1</sup> The missionary must carry the Church with him. The wisdom of this has been proved by experience, and an evangelist notes that a whole winter's work by the missionary and a helper produced nothing, but a later programme, drawn up by, and worked in co-operation with, the local congregation, resulted in enquirers after every single service.

Here a digression is necessary to refer to a suggestion which has been frankly made, and which, if acceptable, would prove a solution to a number of our problems. In an illuminating book dealing with the Moslem world the Rev. C. R. Watson has much to say about the possibility of encouraging the formation of a new movement inside Islam, consisting of those who have learned to admire Jesus Christ. He imagines this group growing apart from any formal relationship with the Christian Church, retaining the relevant parts of Islamic belief and ritual, and eventually breaking with Islam, or being thrust out. His case is backed by a quotation of Dr. H. V. White of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions who urges "that the situation requires, for the present at least, the giving up of the baptism of

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Heinrich. "The Humblest Christian can spread the Evangel" (leaflet) p. 5.



converts with their consequent separation from the Moslem community."<sup>1</sup> This non-insistence upon the rite of baptism appears to have some support from so famous a person as Dr. Zwemer who writes, "When a man has been moved by God's Spirit and earnestly strives to enter in at the strait gate, we ought not to make harder for him what is already hard enough. We ought not to make demands of him which according to the circumstances in which God has placed him he cannot fulfil, but look to the main point, namely, faith in Christ and prayer-life in Him. We may leave the incidental and external for his own conscience."<sup>2</sup> The last sentence must be noted, for he does not ignore baptism completely, as is clear in a later word. "If baptism is postponed too long even the missionary may regret it. There have been instances where this privilege was withheld for fear of persecution; and yet did not prevent it, or even martyrdom."<sup>3</sup>

The idea is an attractive one for those, both enquirers and missionaries, who face the ominous difficulties which inevitably follow baptism, but the experience of both groups appears to show that undue delay is more dangerous than any apparent risks involved in taking the step. A convert, in answer to a questionnaire, expressed deep regret that he had remained undecided for many years and had not come to a definite conclusion more quickly. Others urged courageous decision for baptism. The

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<sup>1</sup> C. R. Watson. "What is this Moslem World" p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> S. Zwemer. "The Law of Apostacy in Islam." p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid , p. 110.

writer is in touch at present with a very sincere enquirer of almost five years' standing who is hesitating to take a clear position, and, in consequence, appears to be growing cold.

The words of the Saviour are clear. His followers are not to be ashamed of Him before men, and they are to enter the Church through the rite of baptism. Surely, therefore, we must stress this teaching, and urge the confession with the mouth which must accompany belief in the heart, (Rom. 10: 9), whilst leaving the final decision with the convert himself. We have no doubt that those secret disciples who are truly His followers will be honoured by the Master, but we cannot expect that they will ever live full-orbed Christian lives in such lonely circumstances.

It has been necessary to deal with this point before completing our conclusions as it is an important suggestion towards a solution, and cannot be ignored.

The central conclusion has already been stated as the close relation of the Christian Church as a whole to the general evangelistic programme and the nurture of converts. This forms a framework for other fruits of this study which may be stated in brief.

It must be recognised that we possess most powerful instruments of evangelism in the Bible, and the positive preaching of Christ and Christianity. Our approach to the Muslim, if it is to be fruitful, must stress the Written Word, and must present the fulness of God in Jesus Christ, and the excellencies of our religious heritage.

In the pre-baptism period there must be a very careful weeding-out of undesirables, particularly of those whom Bevan Jones calls "converted controversialists, men whose minds have been convinced though their hearts have not been changed;"<sup>1</sup> and motives must, as far as possible, be examined. "We need something more than a mere intellectual acceptance of certain historic facts, we must insist upon a living, personal faith or trust in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour."<sup>2</sup> Failure to apply searching tests has been, to a large extent, the cause of many lapses. As a means to this end it would appear wise, despite the obvious risks, to introduce the enquirer to members of the local congregation, and to encourage his regular attendance at Christian services. That Christians should get to know the interested seeker, and should have some share in leading him towards the place of decision is surely vital, and will undoubtedly bring strength to his soul, and make all the easier his integration in the community. It is to be hoped also that the presence of this new element would inspire consecration of life, resulting in higher standards of Christian living which would be in accord with the enquirer's expectations.

The climax of baptism would create much more personal interest, for, under these circumstances the candidate will be, not an outsider, or a special protégé of the missionary, but a friend in whose confession of Christ the congregation has a very practical share.

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<sup>1</sup> Bevan Jones. "The People of the Mosque" p. 331.

<sup>2</sup> "Methods of Mission Work among Moslems" p. 140

It follows also that in the period after baptism all will watch progress with sympathy and consideration; Bible study will become a Church concern instead of a one-man-show; and the fellowship of prayer will be experienced in the company of the believers, instead of in the pastor's study.

However, all this pre-supposes two things (a) a far-reaching revival of spiritual life in the Church, combined with (b) a radical change of attitude towards Muslim converts on the part of every Christian. Present-day recognition of the need for the first point is very clear, but the writer would suggest the inclusion of the second point as a necessary fruit of any new life. To be practical: Let us combine with our efforts towards spiritual revival what Canon Gairdner once called a "Thought-Campaign." Let there be constant emphasis upon the idea: "My Church as a Spiritual Home for Muslim Converts," and prayer with effort towards the inflaming of the congregations with "a spirit which at any cost is willing, ready, and able to provide a satisfying spiritual home for Muslim converts"<sup>1</sup> This conception can be spread by sermons, Bible study-circles, conventions, and conferences. It will take some years, even generations, but a Church-wide campaign of this type appears to be the one method which, by the power of the Spirit of God, will bring the church into the front-line of evangelism, and make it that worthy spiritual home for the converts from Islam which is a need we cannot help recognising. Such a Church would

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<sup>1</sup> "The Christian Life and Message" New York. p. 328.

be a Gospel in itself, a source of power, and an attraction to all who sincerely seek the salvation of God. It is the writer's firm conviction that only under such conditions will the present problem be mitigated, and that such an aim can be realised by the initiation of a campaign for the deepening of the spiritual life of the Christian community with the central slogan, "The Christian Church a Spiritual Home for all true followers of Jesus Christ."

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